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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ASHGABAT 000983

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (PERRY)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/14/2016

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: RUMORS DISPELLED IN MYRADOVA CASE, BUT SISTERS
REQUEST ASYLUM

REF: A. A) BRUSH-PERRY SEPTEMBER 14 TELECON

[1](#)B. B) ASHGABAT 963 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Jennifer L. Brush for Reasons 1.4 (B)
and (D)

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) Embassy personnel visited the Myradova residence late in the evening September 14 and did not observe any excessive security presence, any indication that the police had entered the Myradova residence nor any other reported difficulties, in contradiction to information received reftelcon A. Embassy personnel took photos of Myradova's body. Charge consulted with German, OSCE and French heads of mission September 15 to discuss the case and learned of the brief occupation of Turkmenistan's embassy in Paris. The Myradova sisters visited the embassy September 15 to request feedback and also demand political asylum. Embassy personnel outlined issues related to the political asylum process, while noting the sisters' fears, concerns and complaints. End Summary.

Nighttime Visit to Myradova Residence

[1](#)2. (C) Following events earlier on September 14 (see reftel B) and subsequent to feedback from Washington, three embassy personnel returned to the Myradova residence at about 10:00 p.m. Although there were several cars and individuals in the area, it did not seem uncommonly crowded for a neighborhood of apartment buildings. Ogulsparar Myradova's son was outside the stairwell and escorted embassy personnel upstairs and into the family's apartment. The Myradova sisters and two or three other women were mourning the body upon emboffs' arrival.

[1](#)3. (C) The Myradova sisters said that the police had not entered their apartment, demanded the return of their mother's body nor confiscated their sibling's camera (again in contradiction to information received by the Department per ref A). The sisters pulled out the digital camera and showed embassy personnel a four-minute video they had recorded of the condition of their mother's body. It is unclear whether the sisters also took still images of their

mother's body. The sisters consented to embassy viewing the body again and to the taking of photographs. Due to the condition of the body, the sisters had not turned it over to determine if there were any injuries or markings sustained on the back. After taking photographs, embassy assured the family that photos taken by the embassy would not/not be released outside of U.S. government channels. The sisters confirmed that their phones had been disconnected. Embassy personnel had no difficulty departing the residence and subsequently met the Charge and telephoned Department's Turkmenistan Desk Officer Perry to discuss developments.

Germans Convene Morning Meeting on Case

14. (C) The following morning (September 15), Charge met with German Charge d'Affaires Astrid Wolf (also representing the European Union), Ashgabat OSCE Ambassador Ibrahim Djigic and French Ambassador Christian Le Chevry to discuss next steps in the case. Le Chevry told the group that he received four phone calls the previous evening from Foreign Minister Rashit Meredov regarding a two-hour penetration of the Turkmenistan Embassy in Paris by five people representing Journalists Without Borders; he was scheduled to meet with Meredov this morning. (Note: It was later reported to the Charge that Meredov remained completely silent when Le Chevry asked that the government release an official report on Myradova's cause of death. End Note.) During the meeting, OSCE Human Dimensions Officer Benjamin Moreau told the group that Myradova had annually visited the center regarding the imprisonment of her brother for the past four years. Since January 2006, the frequency of her visits had steadily increased and she told Moreau that she was taking videos and

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was feeding increasingly more information about the government to the Turkmenistan Helsinki Foundation. All agreed that the case continued to be suspicious, and all public responses should refrain from commenting on the case against Myradova, but rather focus on calling for the government to act transparently and legally. The first step would be to call on the government to release a statement regarding the event and the autopsy stating the cause of death. Charge told the attendees the details of the September 14 events as witnessed by emboffs, highlighting the factual details in juxtaposition to the inaccurate details being printed in the media and on human rights groups' websites. Charge did not mention embassy had taken photographs of the body.

Embassy Reviews Photos

15. (C) Charge consulted certain U.S. mission staff, including resident medical nurse practitioner, to review details of the case. After discussion and review of photos, staff came to the preliminary conclusion that the cause of death could remain inconclusive. Myradova appears to have suffered a broken nose and jaw. Some of the injuries and marking on the body could have occurred post-mortem. There was some discoloration on her leg, ankle and shoulder. There is a marking on the neck, but it is not a wound and not bruised, therefore probably occurred after death. Myradova also had a history of heart disease and it apparently is common practice to deny patients their medications while in prison. Embassy is providing the photographs to various USG medical professionals for further analysis, but not/not for distribution outside of the USG.

Myradova Sisters Return to Embassy

16. (C) The Myradova sisters returned to the embassy September 15 in the afternoon. The sisters opened their comments first by asking what had been done with the photos taken the previous evening, and second what conclusions had

we made regarding the cause of their mother's death. Embassy personnel advised the sisters that the photos had been taken to record the condition of the body, and that the photos had not been distributed. Secondly, embassy personnel responded that cause of death could not be ascertained. The sisters indicated that burial had already taken place, and added that their residence is under continued surveillance. They expressed fear for their lives, and noted that family members had been staying with them for added protection.

17. (C) The Myradova sisters then requested political asylum and stated they would no longer provide information to the embassy without our granting this request. They added that some relatives and friends blamed them for their mother's death, noting that their contact with "foreign agencies" had caused Myradova's death. The sisters lashed out at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) with four points:

-- the OSCE shared too much information about their mother's case;

-- the OSCE was ineffective;

-- the OSCE abandoned them after the death of their mother; and

-- the OSCE could only generate statistics on democracy and not much else.

18. (C) In addressing their request, embassy noted the difficulty of the case, the need to gather more information and the inability to provide immediate answers. However, embassy also advised the Myradova sisters of our inability to process a political asylum case at the embassy on their behalf. Embassy also noted issues regarding their need to travel abroad for an asylum request, as well as the option of

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approaching the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The sisters did not respond to this feedback. Embassy informed the sisters of some of the international developments relating to their mother's death, and also advised them of the likely transmission of a message to them from the leadership of Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty. The meeting then ended.

Public Inquiries and Comments

19. (SBU) Embassy Ashgabat has received direct inquiries from Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty correspondents as well as Human Rights Watch. Embassy notes that stories regarding Myradova's death have appeared in various foreign news accounts, on human rights organization websites, opposition political party sites and elsewhere. However, given the nature of Turkmenistan's government-controlled media, there has been no reporting of Myradova's death in the local news. Embassy notes the accurate and balanced tone of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media's statement regarding Myradova's death.

Comment

10. (C) The OSCE, the German Embassy and the U.S. Embassy think that this case has the earmarks of a set-up. The ex-con and police past of Myradova's accomplice Amanglychev continues to cast a shadow on the case, with local observers suggesting Myradova may have been a victim of a government-orchestrated scheme to discredit the human rights community. The Myradova sisters' telephones were not cut until after the inaccurate Turkmenistan Helsinki Foundation report was released on September 14 detailing the release of Myradova's body and the involvement of U.S. Embassy officers. Historically, the government has cut both land and cellular

phone lines of local reporters when sensitive and damning information was being transmitted; lines have been restored when it appeared the government wanted to monitor what was being transmitted internationally. The government may have considered the utility of ending the Myradova sisters' telephone communications and determined that their contact with international organizations would now be detrimental to the government's cause. Their fears of government retribution are not unfounded and they know that their futures and the futures of their family members are now in jeopardy. Given the continued inaccuracy and discrepancies being generated by the Turkmenistan Helsinki Foundation, post recommends not focusing on the attributes of the Myradova case itself. Instead, post recommends keeping to the higher ground and advocating for the international community to focus on the available facts, work in concert, and demand transparency from the government regarding the cause of death. Waiting two weeks for the autopsy is paramount to maintaining both the moral and the tactical advantage with the government. The human rights community's tendency to spin this case as solely a human right case -- and to rely on inaccurate information -- could be detrimental to the international community's ability to address human rights in Turkmenistan with adequate credibility. End Comment.

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